

SB 1035

~~HB05036~~

~~An Act Concerning the Abolition of the Death Penalty~~

~~Repealing~~

~~SB00794~~

~~An Act Concerning the Death Penalty Appeals~~

Testimony of Anne Rossi

March 7, 2011

Thank you for allowing me to be here today. I am here as a supporter of the death penalty.

In 2003, my husband Barry Rossi, his business partner and friend Robert Stears and their employee Lorne Stevens were murdered. All three of them were asked to lie on the dirty garage floor where they worked, they were asked to put their hands over their heads before they were all shot multiple times. All of them killed in a premeditated execution spurred by a murder for hire plot. Forethought and conscience decisions were made to take their lives and to kill them. You must unfortunately experience the pure evil that penetrates every aspect of your life when this happens to comprehend the importance and purpose of the death penalty. I am one of those individuals that can now understand after being forced into a forever changed world. A world not for the better. My assumption is that most of you have not personally experienced an event of this nature. I ask you to considerer that before you make any decisions in regards to the death penalty.

There must be accountability for actions so unjust as this. It crushes you into a million jagged pieces. The pieces cannot be put back together the same as they were before. I will never be the same.

Prosecutors in our case were able to use the death penalty to secure the convictions of the shooter and mastermind of Barry's, Roberts's and Lorne's murders. The shooter agreed to testify, saving the state the cost of his trial, saving the state the cost of his appeals, all while securing the conviction of the mastermind. He would not have testified had he not been facing the death penalty.

The people that commit these crimes DO NOT want to sit on death row in isolation. They want to be in general population. Death isn't what scares them, the isolation does. Facing death row is a motivator for them to cooperate which in turn helps bring others to justice.

What I've seen is that the death penalty is a necessary and valuable tool for prosecution. It provides our prosecutors with a resource, a tool in prosecuting the types of cases that warrant it. I see them using the

death penalty only in the most heinous of crimes. It frightens and concerns me that this tool would even be considered to be taken away. We need to provide our prosecutors with the tools they need to perform their jobs to the best of their ability.

While the process right now is not perfect, it IS fixable without abolishing it. Abolishing the death penalty now will only lead to lesser punishments for criminals in the future. It is in existence because it is an apt punishment for certain crimes. It is justified. Finding justice is so very important to us living victims and must be served to balance the injustice served on the lives so unnecessarily taken.

Cost should not be a factor in abolishing the death penalty when something so immoral and evil has occurred. Costs can be controlled. My husband's life held value. Losing him was costly. Changing the laws to place time limits on the unending appeals would certainly be a good start.

Some will argue that the process re-victimizes you. Personally I do not feel that way. The judicial system is there to do what is right, to protect us, to serve justice. It is not about the living victim more than it is to see justice served upon the evil. Yes the court proceedings are painful, but they are necessary. Lengthy court proceedings will occur with these types of crimes regardless of if it is a death penalty case or not. The living victims, or survivors, have a choice. I know for me, there was no question in my mind that I would be sitting at every court proceeding no matter what, no matter how long.

Polls have showed that 65% of Connecticut's residents are in favor of the death penalty. To me that means 65% of our legislative body should be in favor of it. You have the responsibility of respecting and supporting the wishes of the people of this state. The jurors in the Steven Hayes trial spoke loud and clear of how our state citizens feel in regards to the death penalty when they delivered their sentence. A death sentence was appropriate in that case. It should speak volumes to you when you are considering abolishing the death penalty. There are certain crimes and certain people that warrant punishment by death. These people can never be in society again. Your responsibility is to secure that they never are in society again.

I believe in capital punishment. You may think you know how you feel about it, but until something like what happened to me, happens to you, you don't really know. My husband was good man, he was viciously killed for no reason. I've been given the reason to really contemplate, to think, and debate with myself how I really feel about it. Recently the person who planned and paid for the murders of Barry, Robert and Lorne was attacked by his cellmate. He was in critical condition in the hospital and the word I received was that he wasn't going to make it through the night. I have to tell you I felt relief. I was good with it if he died. That

would have been justice. It is important for the living victims to find justice. It is needed to heal. Our society must have rules, parameters and punishment appropriate for each type of crime.

I am asking you today to maintain the death penalty as a tool for our prosecutors and to work together to fix what is broken such as the lengthy appeals process. Consider long and hard before abolishing something that holds a place in our society and has a purpose. For my husband Barry, for Robert Stears, for Lorne Stevens, and for everyone who was so unnecessarily taken from us before their time, and for those to come, you must maintain the death penalty to maintain justice in our world for the unspeakable evil that does exist.